

Peru: The Case of "La Cantuta"

The Fujimori dictatorship is responsible for the kidnapping and murder of ten university students and staff.

By Manuel Garcia Irigoyen

(Supporter of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzmán)

Translated from Spanish

June 1994

While the university is officially named The National Education University Enrique Guzman y Balle, it is better known as "La Cantuta". La Cantuta is the Quechua word originally given by the Incas to the Clavellina, an Andean flower that has red petals. The flower was believed to be magical, and was worshiped. The students of this Peruvian university are called "Cantutos", and because of their continuous and disciplined struggle to defend student rights, the reactionary Lima press has given them the same nickname as the colour of the flower: reds.

Months before the case which became known as "La Cantuta", the University was infiltrated by eight agents of the Army Intelligence Service who had been personally trained by Major Santiago Martin Rivas (commonly known in military circles as "Bronco" or "Fuhrer") and Captain Carlos Pichiligue ("Panther"), who in turn were responsible to Vladimiro Montesinos Torres (called "Rasputin" because of the power he held behind the scenes). Montesinos was a Captain in the Artillery who was expelled from the Peruvian Army due to his shameless and public links with the North American CIA and drug trafficking, but who is now principal advisor to the President of the country, Alberto Fujimori. In addition to being infiltrated, La Cantuta University, like seven other universities, had been occupied by a detachment of more than a hundred soldiers who controlled the comings and goings of the students day and night. Then, after the press carried out an insulting and poisonous campaign on behalf of the current Fujimori regime, Vladimiro Montesinos gave the order to initiate an operation involving the



POLICE RECONSTRUCTION: According to the Coroner's Report, this is how Luis Enrique Ortiz Perea was murdered.

Translation of an article in the Peruvian Press

THIS IS HOW THEY WERE MURDERED

In their conclusions in a report based on more than 500 pieces of evidence uncovered at Huachipa, the Coroner's Office has reconstructed the manner in which the "disappeared" from La Cantuta were executed.

On November 22, 1993, a complete human skeleton was found at Huachipa. It has been determined that it is that of Luis Enrique Ortiz Perea. His skull showed signs of three bullet wounds (of 9mm caliber).

An expert in the Forensic Division of the Peruvian Technical Police has determined the way in which he was executed. The three shots were from the back of the head to the front, slightly to the left, indicating that the position of the gunman was behind or above the victim. Two wounds, with the entry holes close to one another and a common direction of exit, proved that the shots were fired immediately after one another. This also allows one to deduce the probable position of the victim's body; face down. The experts conclude that the third hole corresponds to a coup de grace.

The laboratory of the Forensic Division has also finished its report on the more than 500 pieces of evidence discovered in Huachipa. The reports of the archaeologists

kidnapping and murder of members of the University. (While General Julio Salazar Monroe is the nominal head of the National Intelligence Service, it is Montesinos, and not Monroe, who is its real head. The General is merely a front man, and is in practice an accomplice of Montesinos.)

The facts: kidnap and murder



Vladimiro Montesinos, alias "Rasputin". He was a Captain, expelled from the Army because of his links with drug trafficking and the CIA. He is the principal advisor to Fujimori and the creator of the "Colina Group" death squad.

In the early hours of the morning of July 18, 1992, one of the intelligence agents who had infiltrated the university residence pretended to sleep while the death squad, led by Major Santiago Martin Rivas, broke in. The soldiers, with their faces hidden by fajaclava hoods, kicked and hit students and professors with their rifle butts. At the same time they selected those they were going to kidnap: nine students (seven men and two women) and Professor Hugo Munoz Sanchez. They accused Professor Munoz, without any proof whatsoever, of being the one in the University who was responsible for the People's Intellectual Movement, an organization established by the Communist Party of Peru (called "Sendero Luminoso" by the reactionary media). While being beaten continually, they were forced into one of five pick-up trucks that made up the death squad's convoy. All of the pick-ups had license plates with the letters KG, the code of the Intelligence Service. All the weapons of the kidnappers (machine guns, pistols and revolvers) were fitted with silencers. On the way to Lima (a distance of 35 kilometers) they continued "speaking to the Senderistas with blows", according to the lumpen way of speaking for NCO Jesus Sosa ("Chato"). The convoy stopped near to the Government Palace to drop

off the agent who had infiltrated the university. Then the caravan made its way to the Army General Headquarters, an expensive and ludicrous bunker called the "Little Pentagon". The feared Army Intelligence Service under the control of Colonel Alberto Pinto Cardenas, alias "Ugly Duck", is located on the North side. According to an article by Gustavo Gorriti (in the Lima magazine "Caretas", no. 1299), "at the time of the La Cantuta events, Fujimori lived - as is documented in many places - in the headquarters of the Army Intelligence Service (SEI). Furthermore, Fujimori is what those in the business schools would call a 'petty businessman', who needs to see and approve every detail as part of his perception of power". The basement of this military facility, which had originally been designed for the storage of records and other materials, had been transformed by the dictatorship into dungeons and real torture chambers. It was here that they dragged the professor and students, and then submitted them to intense torture. The professor, who was a heavy man, was considered the "leader", and was therefore subjected to the worst atrocities. According to whispered testimony published in the Lima magazine "Si" (no. 326), discontented soldiers revealed that the professor and students were in the Army Intelligence Service facilities for two days. They also said that because

the families of the detainees immediately went to the press and pressured them to find out where their children and relatives were, the kidnappers decided to transfer the group to the Army Officers School, whose Commanding Officer was Colonel Edmundo Oregon Val Verde, a section of the Special Forces Division (DIFE), commanded in turn by General Luis Perez Document. Colonel Obregon, outraged that such a transfer had been made without consultation and recognition of this authority, ordered Santiago Martin Rivas to take the prisoners from his complex. After a bitter argument, Martin Rivas obeyed the order and took the detainees away. "They were in a deplorable state, only partly human", said one source who saw them there. Fifteen days later Obregon died in a "terrorist" attack that was attributed to "Sendero Luminoso". The attackers were "immediately captured", but nobody has seen them to this day. General Luis Perez Document (called by his comrades in arms "Tuto" and "big Hand" - the latter nickname due to his reputation for pocketing the property of others) was implicated in the assassination of Colonel Obregon. Perez Document was proposed to be the military attaché to the Peruvian Embassy in Madrid, but the nomination was not put into effect because of international accusations implicating him in human rights violations.

The next that was heard of the kidnapped, or what remained of them, was ten months later when a General of the Engineers Division,



NCO's **Pedro Suppo Sanchez, Julio Chuqui Aguirre, Nelson Carbajal Garcia and Hugo Coral**, murderers, members of the "Colina Group". Sentenced to 15 years for "obeying orders". But whose?

Rodolfo Robles, third in the high command of the Army, made an accusation during an interview given to the Spanish daily newspaper "El Pais" (May 19, 1993). He said that in the very heart of the Peruvian Army there was a "mafia core in uniform". From his fortified refuge in the Argentine capital where he had fled, Robles went to great lengths to accuse the Presidential advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos, of having formed a death squad called the "Colina Group" and of being the mentor of multiple operations carried out by the murder squad, among them the massacre at Barrios Altos and at the universities of La Cantuta and Huancayo. He also confirmed that the professor and students from La Cantuta had been murdered. The only thing that remained for him to do was to find the whereabouts of their remains in order to begin legal action. Robles also accused the Supreme Chief of the Army, General Nicolas de Bari Hermosa, of covering up these crimes as well as others committed against lawyers, journalists, doctors, teachers, etc. The massacre of Barrios Altos, (the name of a poor area of Lima) was another act which

was recognizably the work of the "Colina Group", headed by Martin Rivas, where they fired at close range, killing fifteen people, including women and children, who were celebrating a family party in November 1991. The only crime of the massacred was their place of origin (they were immigrants from the province of Ayacucho and, therefore, "they were suspected of being Senderistas") and who, furthermore, had bothered the neighboring barracks with their noise. Robles also said that he had no serious doubts about whether Fujimori knew of the secret plans of Vladimiro Montesinos and General Nicolas de Bari because of the backing that they had from the President and because of the obstacles that Fujimori put in the way of any investigation into what had happened in La Cantuta. However, the accusing General is not free of guilt, even though he tried to justify himself for not having disclosed these crimes earlier by saying he "had no knowledge of them" and he "believed that they dealt with anti-subversive maneuvers". So what are we left with? That he was the only one in the military high command who did not know of this homicidal practice? Or perhaps he supposed that the accusations of the families, which appeared for months in any press that was not totally submissive to the dictatorship, were also subversive maneuvers" The answer lies in the history of privilege that the military has always enjoyed in Peru, and which it still enjoys. In fact, General Robles only lifted the lid from the rotten pot when he was denied his transfer to the Interamerican Defense Administration, with its headquarters in Washington D.C., and where he would have received a monthly salary of \$7,000 as well as an additional amount for travel and other expenses.

In July 1993, in the vicinity of Cieneguilla close to Lima, four shallow graves were found which contained human remains that had been burnt and broken into small pieces. "....Although the President and the police say that the bones that have been found are the remains of Sendero Luminoso's victims, the Maoist guerrilla group, western diplomats, human rights groups, journalists and members of the Constituent Congress do not agree. They say that the bones are those of some of the nine students and a professor who disappeared from La Cantuta University of Lima in 1992, and who were supposedly murdered by a military execution squad which had



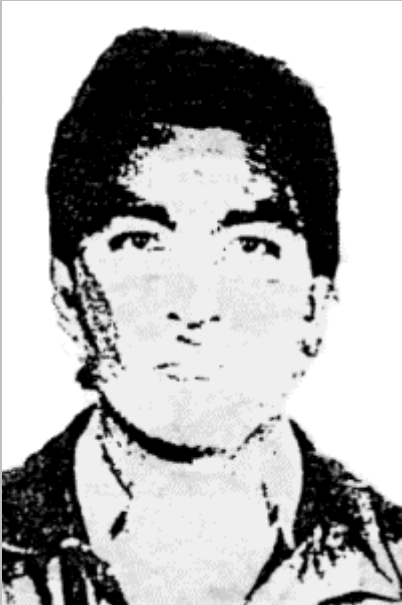
Santiago Martin Rivas

Called "Bronco" or "Fuhrer", head of the "Colina Group" death squad. After the murders of La Cantuta he was promoted to Commander. He has participated in numerous criminal operations, among them the massacre at Barrios Altos. Even the Generals of the Peruvian Army fear him.

carried out at least three similar operations". (New York Times, August 13, 1993) Today it has been proven that the "Colina Group" initially buried the bodies and covered them with lime to speed their decomposition. Later, as the pressure from the investigations increased, they disinterred the bodies, burnt the remains, broke up the charred bones and reburied them. However, in their attempt to erase the evidence of the crime, all that they really achieved was to leave more clues.

Since the events at La Cantuta there have been more kidnappings of students from the same university, whose whereabouts are still unknown. Other universities, such as San Marcos, the Engineering University, the University of Huancayo, etc., are occupied by State military bodies and students are constantly kidnapped. Some later reappear dead, or they are simply never seen again.

Justice: Another con-trick of the dictatorship



Carlos Pichilingue Guevara
(aka "Panther")

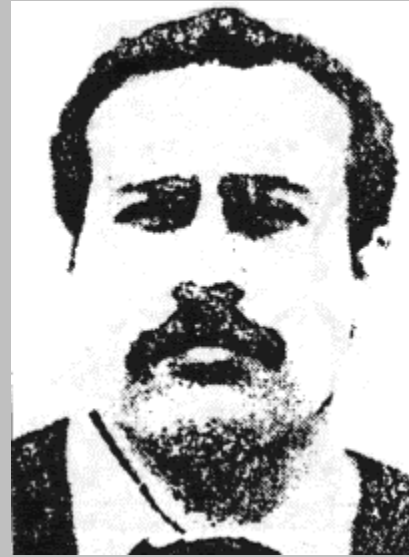
He was also promoted for "efficient services in his work for national security and the defense of democracy". Second in Command of the "Colina Group" death squad. He was under the orders of Commander Luis Cubas Portal, brother-in-law of Montesinos.

It was clear that this crime was not committed as a consequence of any breakdown in the military structure, as it could be, for example, during times of rebellion, sedition, lack of leadership, simple disobedience...; but that this was a common crime, just like any other murder, even though it may have been committed by the military. Despite the fact that there were no doubts about this, a struggle was artificially created over whether the crime should be tried in the civilian or military courts. The intention of this "controversy" was to dilute the investigation process that was already beginning to be discussed in the Constituent Congress. (This Congress has been called by popular Peruvian with the "Congress of the geishas", because of its extreme submissiveness, and referring to the old Eastern empire during the reigns of dictators with the same national origin as Fujimori.) Fujimori repeatedly expressed his desire that the case be heard by military tribunals, "in order to avoid political maneuvers". In April 1993, the Chief of the Armed Forces, General Nicolas de Bari Hermosa ("Tsar Nicolas"), ordered armored cars into the streets of Lima in order to intimidate the "Congress of the geishas" which at that time was debating the possibility of transferring the case to civilian jurisdiction. The "crazy general's coup" tried to frighten the Congress into adopting a half acceptable process where not only those who executed the crime, but also those who were the instigators (that is to say Montesinos himself, Perez Document and the other accomplices in the Army high command) would take

part.

On February 7, 1994, the obedient "Congress of the geishas", working secretly and at an accelerated pace, passed the requested exception, which is already known as the La Cantuta Law. By this means the case of La Cantuta was passed from the Civilian Court to the Military Tribunal. This exception was previously agreed to by the Supreme Court of Justice, which had been reconstructed and manipulated by the regime. According to the polls, this constitutionally violation caused a drop in 10 points in the polls among those intending to vote for the dictator Fujimori, and a rise of six points in the already high level of those who plan to abstain from voting in the elections that are due in 1995. Prime Minister Alfonso Bustamante also resigned immediately, because, "Peru appears before all the world as a country where a real separation of powers does not exist". But within the great variety of reactions caused by the confusion, it was the Minister of Justice - no less - who, with a straight face, argued that "Peru is facing a state of emergency and it has to make drastic decisions, even though they may violate various articles of the new Constitution".

Once the case had finally been transferred to the War Room of the Supreme Council of Military Justice, it broke every record of efficiency in the annals of Peruvian legal history. Within a dictatorship in which all institutions suffer an almost endemic paralysis, the questionable Tribunal scarcely took longer than two days to study the more than two thousand pages of evidence and pass sentence. In reality, what happened was that "the operation was organized within the National Intelligence Service, in close collaboration with the Commanding General's office". ("Caretas", no. 1299, February 17, 1994)



NCO Jesus Sosa Saavedra
(aka "Chato" and "Kerosene"), participated violently and enthusiastically in the kidnapping, torture and murder. Later he disinterred and burnt the bodies.



Colonel Edmundo Obregon Valverde argued with Santiago Martin Rivas and two weeks later he was dead. He was Chief of the Commando School and answered to General Luis Perez Document, who has been implicated in his assassination.

Before sentencing, the silence of the actual executioners was negotiated in order to make it appear to the public that "they would pay" for their guilt. As is now known, they will spend some months in the barracks and then they will leave the country. Furthermore, - according to their superior officers - they are indeed guilty, but not for their crimes. They are instead guilty of a botched job, and for leaving incriminating evidence all over the place.

According to the military judge, Colonel Raul Talledo, there are six actual assassins: Majors Santiago Martin Rivas and Carlos Pichilingue, both sentenced to twenty years, and the NCOs Jesus Sosa Saavedra, Julio Chuqui Aguirre, Nelson Carbajal Garcia and Pedro Suppo Sanchez, sentenced to fifteen years. But, according to eyewitnesses there were more than fifteen soldiers who kidnapped the students and professor that early morning. Others sentenced, in order to save appearances, are General Juan Rivero, of the Intelligence Office (five years); Colonel Federico Navarro, of the Internal Investigation Division of the same organization (four years) and Captain Jose Velarde, head of the military detachment within the

University, who "looked after" La Cantuta (one year). Lieutenant Aquilino Portella, also in charge of the military barracks of the University, fled from the country before the beginning of the trial. These are the fall guys, but it is known that there are at least forty officers who are linked to the case. Furthermore, if the hundreds of cases of abduction and murder, extra-judicial executions, massacres inside the prisons, massacres in the isolated indigenous communities, all of which amount to genocide, are reopened and investigated, practically all the Armed Forces would be sitting in the chair of the accused. Without any doubt whatsoever, the time will come when they will be accountable before a legitimate Justice.

The significance of La Cantuta

Since the beginning of the People's War in May 1980 and to this date, the massacres perpetrated by the police and the military number in the hundreds. In December 1982, before the advance of the People's War and in the face of the incapacity of the Police Forces to contain it, the repression was taken up by the Armed Forces (the Army, Marines and Air Force). In the isolated department of Ayacucho they began the annihilation of peasants and the destruction of entire villages. If the guerrilla must move like a "fish in water", the animal-like solution of the

counterinsurgency theories was

to "dry up the sea". That is to say, the solution was to indiscriminately kill the peasant masses, as it was assumed that guerrillas exist among them. The book "The Era of Counter-Insurgency" by Douglas S Blaufarb, had, in General Cisneros Vizguerra, its most avid reader. They bloody General described to the press his "theory of 10 for 1" by which he attempted to justify the murder of 10 innocent peasants if one subversive combatant was among those who fell. From July to October 1983 they began to speak of genocide in the city of Ayacucho: 800 corpses were thrown into the streets. "The military troops introduced their own method of warfare. They began a blood-thirsty hunt for men and women. They bombed villages. From helicopters they machine gunned hundreds of peasants. They kidnapped, tortured, raped women, cut the throats of children. Thousands of villagers disappeared. Common graves were everywhere in Ayacucho. The results of the war imposed by the Army are macabre, apocalyptic. None of this stops the progress of the People's War that spread from the area of Ayacucho and developed throughout most of Peru". (El Diario Internacional, no. 19) To sum up, the total number of victims in the 14 years of People's War easily surpasses the 35,000 sons and daughters of the people dead; 10,000 disappeared; and 4,000 political prisoners and prisoners of war.

In the face of these figures, the painful events of La Cantuta might appear to be a mere drop in a sea of blood. Many people ask: "Why has the La Cantuta case had such repercussions in the reactionary press as well as in the statements of the political representatives of the Peruvian right?" There are two main reasons.

First, the dictatorial Fujimori regime was caught, one more time, with blood on its hands. But this time there was clear evidence that confirmed, without a shadow of a doubt, the existence of a gang of assassins within the Peruvian Army who were under the orders of



General Juan Rivero Lazo and Colonel Federico Navarro Perez, of the Intelligence Office, sentenced in order to save appearances, to five and four years respectively, under charges of negligence.

Fujimori's principal advisor, the tyrant Vladimiro Montesinos, and the Army high command. This fact, which was a public secret for a number of years, left the regime and the military totally exposed, and the regime remained unmasked.

Secondly, when they made the exception, specifically the "La Cantuta Law" (no. 26291), the "Congress of the gieshas" openly exposed itself as the servant of the dictatorship by violating its own Constitution, which had been approved only a few months before. The "La Cantuta Law" means a real coup d'etat of the executive power against the legislative power and, at the same time, against the judicial power, creating with this measure a new situation of judicial instability. With this law, also called the "Law of conflict of ideas", the very essence of the actual State remains vulnerable, and demonstrates that the military can take recourse (and will take recourse) to any measure that will ensure that they will continue to hold power. This last is what has scandalized the reactionary Peruvian opposition. It is because of this that today they shout and protest so much. But they were quiet after the earlier massacres, when they did not believe that their own interests were at stake.



THE VICTIMS: Hugo Muñoz Sánchez, Pablo Meza Heráclides, Marcelino Manuel Rosales Cardenas, Felipe Flores Chipana, Juan Gabriel Mariños Figueroa, Roberto Edgar Teodoro Espinoza, Luis Perea, Bertila Lozano Torres, Dora Oyague Fierro, Armando Richard Amaro-Cóndor



"Who is it that is behind all this?"

THE COLINA GROUP

According to the magazine "Caretas", this group of assassins was selected by Montesinos himself immediately after Fujimori

came to power

in Peru in July 1990. Initially the gang of assassins was known within the Army as the "Colina Team" and took its name from Jose Colina, and Army Captain who tried to infiltrate the guerrilla movement and, upon being discovered, was executed. Some of its members, such as the bloody Santiago Martin Rivas, had already been members of para-military death squads for several years. According to General Rodolfo Robles, Martin Rivas led the group that kidnapped and murdered the lawyer Manuel Febres, defender of political prisoners and prisoners of war, in July 1988 in Lima. Other members of the "Colina Group" were recruited by Montesinos in the same manner as in the film "The Dirty Dozen". That is to say, "he looked for soldiers with a delinquent record and with psychological problems, whose careers and promotions were cut short by bad conduct. Those officers at the boundary between expulsion and prison. Just as in the North American film, the selected undesirables were given the opportunity the remake their military careers and win promotions, in addition to receiving the sum of one thousand five hundred US dollars a month. In order to qualify for this prize they only had to kidnap, murder and "disappear" those people accused of being subversives. They would be those in charge of

"I feel very close to the military, I have a military spirit. Because of this, I do what I do". (Fujimori in an interview in the Lima daily newspaper "El Expresso", January 16, 1994)

"El Mundo", Madrid, July 9, 1994

The Remains of those Murdered in Peru are Returned in Cardboard Boxes

Lima: Yesterday the remains of nine university students and a professor who were murdered in Peru in June 1992 by a death squad made up of active army officers were returned to their families in ordinary cardboard boxes.

The families, confused and upset, received the packages that had previously been left at the headquarters of a human rights group because if was not known where they were to be buried.

The remains of the victims had been in the Department of Criminal Investigation, which had been analysing them as part of the process of the investigation of the crime. There had been a delay in returning the remains of the students and their teacher because the Lima authorities had refused to sell the families a

(El Diario International no. 19)

Up to now it has been proven that this "monstrous killing machine" has killed more than 60 people between 1990 and 1992, but it is sure to be many more.

they wanted to build a mausoleum so that they could all be buried together. A spokesperson for the families said that they would eventually bury their dead in ordinary graves.

The Peruvian courts sentenced the soldiers responsible for the mass murder, among them a general and a colonel, to periods of from five to twenty years in prison.

Update: Most of the imprisoned Colina Group were released under Fujimori's 1995 amnesty law for military members convicted, or under investigation, for murder, disappearance, torture, and rape.

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Spanish original published by IEC-Catalunya chapter

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Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzman**